

The Department of Early Learning and Tribal Nations: *Building Partnerships – 2009 Highlights*

Overview

At the Department of Early Learning (DEL), we work every day to help Washington's children get ready for school and life. Created by Governor Chris Gregoire in July 2006, DEL is the first Cabinet-level agency of its kind in the nation. Our work focuses on children's earliest years of life, offering information and resources for children's first and most important teachers: parents. With almost half a million children in Washington ages birth to 6, we have a tremendous opportunity to prepare all of our youngest learners for success.

The Department of Early Learning's Tribal Liaison, DEL Director Bette Hyde, is building partnerships and enhancing communication between DEL and Tribal Nations. During the next year, DEL will continue to work with Tribal Nations to finalize a Centennial Accord plan that supports the communication and consultation efforts between each Tribal Nation and DEL. We look forward to building a plan that supports Tribes in their early learning efforts.

Partnership Highlights

Program Support

- Three Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) contractors currently have sites operated by tribal organizations. During the 2008-09 program year, 5.4 percent of the children enrolled in ECEAP were American Indian and five of the 277 sites were operated by tribal organizations.
- DEL provides a tribal certification process specific to child care licensing for family homes and centers.
- DEL provides DSHS client data to several American Indian Head Start programs on an annual basis to aid in recruitment efforts.

Partnership Building

- DEL sponsored the April 2010 Tribal Early Care and Education Conference which was attended by approximately 180 participants, representing 22 of the Federally Recognized Tribes. The event was held at the Hotel Murano in Tacoma. Additional support was provided by the Colville Tribe who sponsored breakfast; and the Chehalis Tribe, Colville Tribe, Lummi Tribe, Port Gamble S'Kallam

Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, and Tulalip Tribe who generously participated on the workgroup that planned this successful conference.

- A Tribal representative serves on the Advisory Team for the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), our state's kindergarten readiness assessment process to be piloted during school year 2010-2011.
- The DEL Director holds ongoing meetings with Tribes to gather input on the review of the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks.
- The statewide DEL Parent Advisory Group includes tribal representation.
- Tribal representatives participated on the DEL Drafting Team that developed the Recommendations to the Governor for the Statewide Early Learning Plan (August - December 2009).
- Tribal representatives attended a DEL, Thrive and ITEIP sponsored Infant and Toddler Think Tank to help prioritize how DEL spends Federal CCDF Infant and Toddler ARRA funds.
- Tribal representatives attended DEL's Infant and Toddler Outcome-based Planning work session to draft a Theory of Change (February 2010).
- Key meetings held in 2009 by the DEL director with Tribes and Tribal Leaders:
 - June 3, 2009: The DEL director met with Chairman Forsman.
 - August 20, 2009: The DEL Director and staff from the Eastern Service Area met with the Spokane Tribe of Indians to discuss and assist the Spokane Tribe with any child care programming needs.
 - September 9, 2009: The DEL director attended a meeting with Tribes on Kindergarten Assessments.

Infrastructure Development

- The DEL Director attended the 2009 Governor's Centennial Accord meeting and pre-meeting with Tribal Nations.
- DEL attends the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) monthly Tribal Liaison meetings.
- DEL staff continue to work with Department of Social and Health Services Director of Indian Policy and Support Services to discuss DSHS 7.01 plans, and plan for DEL to continue to operate under the DSHS Administrative Policy No.7.01. DEL formed an internal DEL workgroup to explore ways to support Washington Tribal Nations through DEL programs and activities at the service area and local levels.
- DEL participates in the Washington Tribal Child Care conference calls sponsored by the Region X Child Care Bureau.
- DEL has developed a page on the DEL Web site that is focused on tribal relations and resources.